

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 2-6, 20 and 21 are pending herein. Claims 2, 3 and 20 have been amended to depend from independent claim 21.

Examiner Simone is thanked for courtesies extended to Applicants' representative (Steven W. Caldwell) during a telephonic interview on July 29, 2004. During the interview, Examiner Simone tentatively agreed that Komoto, discussed below, does not disclose or suggest a ribbon portion having a material that can be stripped to expose the polarization-maintaining fibers, but would not agree to withdraw the rejection of claim 21 over Komoto until having the chance to review Applicants' written remarks. The following discussion is a detailed account of the subject matter discussed during the interview concerning pending independent claim 21.

1. Claims 1, 2 and 21 were rejected under §102(b) over Komoto et al. With respect to claim 1, this rejection is moot in view of the cancellation of that claim. With respect to pending independent claim 21, to the extent that this rejection might again be applied against claim 21 (and all claims depending therefrom), it is respectfully traversed.

As discussed during the interview, pending independent claim 21 recites, among other things, that a ribbon portion surrounding at least some of the polarization-maintaining fibers includes a material that can be stripped to expose the polarization-maintaining fibers. This claimed feature is not disclosed or suggested in Komoto, discussed below.

With reference to Figs. 1-3 of Komoto, a slow cure rate adhesive 30A is used to bond together the end portions of bare polarization-maintaining fibers 14. The bundled polarization-maintaining fibers are inserted into a glass or quartz capillary tube 20 having an adhesive 30B with high adhesion properties coated on the inner surface thereof.

The PTO's position in the Office Action is apparently that adhesives 30A and 30B correspond to a ribbon portion, as claimed. However, even if Komoto's adhesives 30A and 30B were construed to correspond to a ribbon portion as alleged in the Office Action, Komoto would still fail to disclose or suggest a ribbon portion that can be stripped to expose the polarization-maintaining fibers, as recited in pending claim 21. For instance, if one were to attempt to strip the adhesives from Komoto's fibers, it would be necessary to remove the capillary tube to expose the bare optical fibers before stripping operations could be performed. Pulling the fibers 14 from the inside of the capillary tube would certainly disrupt the adhesive bonding between the adhesives and the fibers, which would, in turn, result in polarization-maintaining fibers that cease to be rotationally aligned in the desired plane of polarization.¹ As such, it is clear, practically speaking, that Komoto does not disclose or suggest that a "ribbon portion comprises a material that can be *stripped to expose the polarization-maintaining fibers*," as claimed.

In view of all of the foregoing, reconsideration and withdrawal of the §102(b) rejection over Komoto are respectfully requested.

2. Claims 3-6 and 20 were rejected under §103(a) over Komoto in view of Kozuka. Applicants respectfully submit that the arguments submitted above distinguish claim 21 from Komoto. Since Kozuka does not overcome the deficiencies of Komoto, and since claims 3-6 and 20 depend either directly or indirectly from claim 21, claims 3-6 and 20 are also believed to be allowable over the prior art of record.

¹ Please see the discussion starting in the last paragraph on page 4 of the January 16, 2004 Amendment for a discussion about the importance of maintaining the rotational alignment of polarization-maintaining fibers.


The PTO was requested to confirm receipt and consideration of the Information Disclosure Statement filed on March 11, 2002 in the July 29, 2003, September 5, 2003 and January 16, 2004 Amendments. A copy of the March 11, 2002 Information Disclosure Statement and our postcard receipt is attached. Due to the volume of the reference cited (and already filed) in the Information Disclosure Statement, a duplicate copy of the cited reference is not being filed herewith. Examiner Simone is requested to telephone the undersigned if she needs a copy of the cited reference. Confirmation of receipt and consideration of the March 11, 2002 IDS would be greatly appreciated.

If Examiner Simone believes that contact with Applicants' attorney would be advantageous toward the disposition of this case, she is herein requested to call Applicants' attorney at the phone number noted below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1446.

Respectfully submitted,

September 28, 2004
Date


Stephen P. Burr
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SPB:SWC:jms

Enclosure:

Copy of March 11, 2002 Information Disclosure Statement

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